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ABSTRACT

This booklet contains an account of the history of the Central States Speech Association (CSSA). Sections of the essay discuss the difficulties of starting and sustaining the CSSA during the Depression of the 1930s, efforts at reorganizing the CSSA, more difficulties during the war years of the 1940s, the change in convention program content over the years, the financial evolution of the organization, the record of changes over the years as documented by the CSAA "Journal," and observations about the future of the CSSA. (RL)

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# FANFARE FOR FIFTY

## A Brief History of the Central States Speech Association

50th Year
1931 - 1981

Central States Speech Association
Loren Reid

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# FANFARE FOR FIFTY

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CENTRAL STATES SPEECH ASSOCIATION

**Loren Reid**

I

*In the beginning only a few people wanted a — what did they call it? — "Federation of Central States Speech Associations"*

Every other region had an association, but the Upper Mississippi Valley was unorganized, unstructured. Its block of thirteen unclaimed states looked like a huge bird with no feet; the broad rear was shaped by the Great Plains states of the Dakotas, Nebraska, and Kansas; the head with its sharp beak was Ohio. This strange bird included the rich, populous, industrial, agricultural, cultural, inland area loosely called the Central States.

Why were we the last to launch a learned society, instead of the first?

A major reason was that we had such close kinship with the national organization, then called the National Association of Teachers of Speech (NATS). We had supplied fifteen of its seventeen founding fathers. Of the three most distinguished founders, James M. O'Neill, Charles M. Woolbert, and James A. Winans, the first two were from Central States institutions. Six of its first ten presidents and three of its first five editors came from our area. We practically *owned* the national association. Most of its conventions were in our front yard: Chicago, Cleveland.

Those who thought about a new regional group frankly said: "We don't need a regional. We can meet so easily at the time of the national convention." Or: "If we do form a regional, we don't need a special convention except during those rare years when the national doesn't meet in our area."

As it is time to mention a date, here it is: 1930.

Even then, however, forces were shaping that pointed to the founding of an organization for the central states.

One came from the region's existing state associations, now behaving like colonies looking for a central government. These state

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Loren Reid, Professor Emeritus of Speech and Dramatic Art, University of Missouri-Columbia, was Executive Secretary of CSSA, 1937-1939.

groups were driven by pressing needs to deal with professional problems confronting elementary and secondary teachers as well as college and university staffs. Why shouldn't elementary school pupils get attention to their speech needs and abilities? Why were high school speech and drama classes and extracurricular activities so often assigned to teachers of English or social studies who had had little or no speech education? Why shouldn't the rapidly growing junior college segment offer competent instruction in speech? Why did institutions of higher learning often not accept speech credits for admission? Why shouldn't state departments of education establish minimum requirements for certification in speech and drama? And why shouldn't there be a journal dealing with problems of teaching these subjects?

The new state associations were facing these issues head-on, but teachers realized that an organization could do more for them than they could for themselves when facing strong, established, teacher-education divisions and state departments of education.

Despite its good intentions, the National Association of Teachers of Speech and the *Quarterly Journal of Speech* gave most of their attention to collegiate interests. Conventions drew few high school teachers, even from the convention city area, and *Journal* articles rarely considered problems of instruction at elementary, secondary, and junior college levels. To its immense credit, however, the *Journal* did print generous sections of news about state and regional association meetings. You cannot pick up one of those early volumes without reading about the formation of a new speech organization as well as about debate tournaments, play festivals, and personal notes. Thus it made teachers aware of what was happening.

Another factor beckoning a Central States association was that NATS decided, in 1930, to admit the president of each regional association to membership on its policy-making Executive Council. Presidents of the Eastern, Western, and Southern groups immediately took their seats. At once the lack of a representative for the central states was evident.

In 1930, departments of speech were not themselves altogether on a solid footing. Few colleges could offer as much as a minor; majors were available only in the larger institutions. On most campuses, speech was a small corner in departments of English. In the whole country were perhaps two dozen Ph.D.'s. including those who, like Giles W. Gray and Woolbert, had taken their degrees in psychology. Only seven institutions, nationwide, offered the doctorate. Speech clinics were just beginning to appear. Some departments had trouble getting approval for courses in technical theater; professors in other areas thought it was mere carpentry. Courses in radio were being approved, rarely, but well-equipped radio studios were scarce. Only

occasionally would a university division require all its students to take speech.

The early '30s were a time when if you attended a convention, you could get a room for $2 without bath; $2.50 if you thought you needed one. Add a dollar if the convention were in a large city. Your convention fee would be $1.50. You could plan an alumni luncheon for 50¢ to 75¢. You could belong to almost any of our learned societies for one to three dollars a year.

II

*Finally, CSSA got under way, despite those years of the Great Depression. . . . Read on*

The person most active in the move to start a central states group was Alan H. Monroe of Purdue University. Recently (1929) he had been involved in the formation of the Indiana Association of Teachers of Speech and knew the issues faced by the profession. He saw that a regional, by bringing state groups together, could make it possible for them to profit by each other's experiences.

At the outset the new regional association was thought of as a servant of state associations. At NATS's 1930 convention in Chicago, Monroe chaired a committee to organize a new Federation of Central States Speech Associations. It called a meeting of delegates from the several state associations for NATS's, 1931 Detroit convention. This meeting created an Executive Council with Monroe as Chairman and Charles R. Layton of Muskingum College as Executive Secretary. The group also named chairpersons of four committees: O.C. Miller, Northwest Missouri State Teachers College, curriculum problems; W. P. Sandford, University of Illinois, college entrance requirements; F. L. D. Holmes, University of Minnesota, state associations; Giles W. Gray, State University of Iowa, planning of the first regional convention. These six persons are the only ones we can now name as founders; the names of others may come to light later. Certainly the group was small, as the meeting was held on the day before the convention proper began. December 27, 1931, is, therefore, the birthday of the Federation.

As the spring of 1932 seemed too near at hand to have a convention, the committee decided to wait until the spring of 1933. Nobody was in a rush to get started. Moreover, these years were the trough of the Great Depression.

No one was surprised that Gray scheduled that first convention on his home campus; this decision might have been made, in fact, at Detroit. As a graduate student and part-time instructor at Iowa, I heard

a lot of talk about the new group, partly from him, but mainly from two fellow teachers of the fundamentals course: Harry G. Barnes and H. Clay Harshbarger, who were strongly interested. Each later served the CSSA as president.

At the Iowa City convention, 175 persons registered, but that figure was attained partly because the annual Iowa University Conference of Teachers of Speech was meeting concurrently, along with a Delta Sigma Rho debate tournament. (Franklin H. Knower, of the University of Minnesota, later a CSSA president, was one of those there with a team.) Resolutions adopted and forwarded to NATS urged it to establish a secondary school periodical. NATS finally decided against the idea; *The Speech Teacher* was not destined to be born for another twenty years.

The second convention was held at Northwestern on April 27 and 28, 1934. We know little about that meeting, except that Barnes was elected President and Layton continued as Executive Secretary. The Inter-State Oratorical Association met conjointly; the coaches sweetened the attendance figure, whatever it was; it was probably small and discouraging.

Interest in the new association accordingly dwindled rapidly. The Wisconsin campus had been selected as the 1935 site, but, after planning had begun, Professors Dennis, Simon, and Hardy of Northwestern urged that since NATS was meeting in Chicago in December, the separate regional convention should be postponed. Andrew Weaver, of the University of Wisconsin, responding to the letter, agreed. In 1981 it is difficult to believe that a few persons, even distinguished old-timers, could halt plans for a scheduled convention, but this move underscores the fact that the new group had little grass-roots support. The 1936 convention also went by the board. So when a small group of members met in December 1936 at the NATS St. Louis convention, the mood was one of grave doubt that CSSA should continue. The deferred Wisconsin meeting was rescheduled for 1937, with the central theme to determine the status of CSSA. Even the election of officers was postponed.

So, after five years, during which only two spring conventions had been held, the demise of the new organization seemed imminent. As his last act, Barnes appointed an Interim Committee on Reorganization with full power to act; it could constitute the Association or dissolve it. The latter eventuality seemed more likely.

## III

*After six years, a handful of teachers meeting at Wisconsin wondered whether it was worth it. The decision was to make one more attempt, at Columbia. Then came World War II*

The 1937 convention at Wisconsin followed the usual plan: a round of sectional meetings on Debate, Dramatics, Interpretation, Rhetoric and Oratory, Speech Rehabilitation, and Radio Speaking; and a round of sectional meetings for the different levels of instruction. The group passed resolutions seeking higher standards for the certification of teachers of speech and drama. But the principal business was to determine the fate of CSSA. On the Interim Committee, truly a second set of founders, were Bower Aly, University of Missouri, chairman; C. E. Lyon, University of South Dakota; Henry Moser, University of Michigan; Myron G. Phillips, Wabash College; Almere L. Scott, University of Wisconsin; Barnes and Layton, *ex officio*.

To its credit, the Interim Committee gave the enfeebled CSSA every chance to survive. At the meeting on "The Status of the Central States Speech Association," we can surmise that pros and cons were fully reviewed, resulting in a slight tilt toward carrying on. Layton spoke urgently for the Association; the notes of his speech still exist. Wilbur E. Gilman was another supporter. At this point the Committee, prepared with a draft constitution of ten simple, uncomplicated articles, brought it forward. It called for an annual convention, regardless of NATS's meeting place, and put membership on an individual, rather than a state, basis. When it was adopted, the group elected Layton as President. It wired me an invitation to become Executive Secretary.

I was then finishing my second year as instructor in speech in the Department of English at the University of Missouri. I was a founder of the Missouri Association of Teachers of Speech, then in its fourth year, and the editor of its journal. I had not gone to Madison as I expected CSSA to be knocked in the head, and did not especially care to attend the funeral. When I read the telegram asking if I would serve as Executive Secretary, I thought the honor was less than overwhelming. I suppose I accepted because I had seen what Missouri's association had already done to improve the professional status of teachers of speech.

In a few days came a letter from Layton, with a list of members and a copy of the minutes, and mention of a convention in Columbia in April. No funds were available. James A. Winans once said that he walked down Michigan Boulevard with the entire assets of the national association in his coat pocket. I walked home down Columbia's Broadway with the entire assets of CSSA in mine.

I asked Wesley A. Wikse!!, then at Stephens College, to chair a Conference Executive Committee. Wikse!l's deep professional interest and capable planning ability dated from state speech association days. The first task was to determine a date that would clear numerous regional tournaments; April 1 and 2, 1938, were available. April Fool's day, for sure.

All in all, the thirty-member committee must have written nearly five hundred le ters to get the job done.

We had no funds, but we told everybody to spend what was needed and present the bil! in April. The printing bill alone was enormous—nearly $200 for 8-page programs, stationery, postcards carrying the preliminary announcement. The committee was not so much a third set of founders as it was a group to nurse the infant association, wash and perfume it clothe it handsomely, and hold it up for all the region to admire.

More than 80 people participated in the program. The 300 people present contributed just enough in $1.25 convention fees to meet our bills. Heath Meriwether, for years publisher of national and regional speech and theater journals, must have been relieved when he was paid. We ended the year as we began, with a zero-based budget.

With the Association apparently now in full health, the convention held at Minneapolis in 1939 attracted 390 delegates. The 1940 convention at Terre Haute went to a three-day program. Oklahoma City attracted 220 delegates in 1941, each member receiving a copy of Vol. I, No. 1 of the *Journal of the Central States Speech Association*; thirty-five pages, edited by Orville A. Hitchcock of the State University of Iowa, then Executive Secretary.

CSSA now had to face a greater hazard—the outbreak of World War II. It went ahead with its plans for a Des Moines convention, with 186 program participants, but the war was beginning to take students out of school by the thousands, and teachers also. Washington issued an edict requesting professional societies to limit their conventions, since transportation and hotel accommodations were desperate. Meetings that were held should focus on problems of national interest. CSSA postponed future activities, putting its assets of $484 in government bonds and suspending its new journal. Other regional associations, and NATS, carried on.

James H. McBurney of Northwestern University served as President 1942-1946, and, with Wayne Thompson of the University of Missouri as Executive Secretary, succeeding Hitchcock, planned the first postwar convention, on the campus of the University of Missouri, in 1947. Columbia thus became the scene of a second attempt to revive CSSA. Only 150 people attended, although 2500 invitations had been mailed; not very encouraging. But the 1948 Chicago convention drew more than 600, reflecting the explosion in college and university

enrollments and the demand for teachers. At the 1949 Omaha convention, the Association felt prosperous enough to establish the present journal, with Lionel Crocker, of Denison University, as editor.

## IV

*Early conventions devoted a single sectional meeting to a whole specialty or level of instruction—for example, Radio Speaking, or Speech in the Secondary Schools*

The programs of those first three decades were decidedly different from those of later years. General sessions had a regional focus; for example, a representative of each of the thirteen state associations would report on state activities. Sectional meetings continued to be devoted to a specialty or a level of instruction. Invariably there would be a play, a reading hour, a discussion, a demonstration of teaching, or other performance.

In 1957 the Association inaugurated a policy of selecting the outstanding young teachers in the profession, who were presented to the convention at the opening general session. Six or eight have been chosen each year, about 170 in all; many have later achieved regional or national recognition as teachers, scholars, and administrators.

With the cooperation of the Speech Communication Association, the old NATS under a new name, CSSA began to feature a placement service at the convention, a vital service. The April convention date proved to be a prime time for interviews, since by then actual vacancies were identified and budgets relatively defined.

The early printed programs were eight to twelve pages long, with no advertising. As the years went by, the programs became longer. The 1970 program of the Chicago convention, for example, contained 52 pages, half of which were ads. By then the range and scope of the meetings reflected a complete change, a result of our rapidly increasing specialization and diversity. The Saturday morning program of that 1970 convention, for example, featured five concurrent meetings. One was on Toulmin Ten Years Later; another, Innovative Ideas in Persuasion. Still others were: Relevant Speech Education for the American Indian, and The Rhetorical Criticism of Social Movements. We no longer saw the single meeting devoted to the single specialty, such as Rhetoric and Public Speaking, or Phonetics. Innovations such as short courses, workshops, caucuses, and office hours appeared. Most printed convention programs are little more than throwaways, but Executive Secretary Carl M. Moore and his associates have recently introduced informative bits about CSSA's past that add to its interest and readability.

In the first fifty years, convention attendance has ranged from 150 to more than a thousand. CSSA has met in nineteen different cities.

Chicago has been our host seventeen times; St. Louis, four; Minneapolis, three; Detroit, including Southfield, three; Columbia, two; Milwaukee, two; Iowa City, Evanston, Madison, Terre Haute, Oklahoma City, Des Moines, Omaha, Columbus, Tulsa, Indianapolis, Cleveland, and Kansas City, one each.

v

*During the first two decades, year-end balances were only two or three hundred dollars. Once we had to borrow eight hundred, just to keep afloat*

The Association's finances have been the primary responsibility of its thirteen executive secretaries, who have reported year-end assets ranging from zero to five figures. A typical year-end balance in the '40s was $185.60. In 1952 the Association borrowed $800 from the national organization, just to stay alive. Two years later, however, it had repaid this massive debt and had a balance of $375. In the '50s a typical year-end balance was $2000 or more.

The Association made prosperous strides in 1963-1969, during the terms of Paul H. Boase, Ohio University, and Larry D. Clark, University of Missouri-Columbia. Boase and Clark took advantage of the improved economic condition of the country to increase memberships and other revenues. At the close of Boase's term the Association's resources amounted to more than $7,500, more than twice the sum with which he started. He also initiated the plan of making other regional journals available to sustaining members who paid an additional fee, a policy continued during Clark's administration. At the end of the decade CSSA claimed 1,700 members and assets of more than $22,000.

In the early '70s, rising postal rates and printing costs temporarily put yearly operations in the red, a situation met by increasing basic dues to $10, sustaining membership dues to $17.50 for those who wanted one journal, $27.50 for those who wanted all four. As the decade ended, the year-end balances reported from Executive Secretaries Gustav W. Friedrich, David M. Berg, and Carl M. Moore ranged from $26,000 to $36,000. Two-thirds of the Association's income now comes from memberships, the largest share from sustaining members who elect to receive all four regional journals. CSSA now has a cushion so that if inflation or other circumstances causes expenses to rise above income, the organization can still meet its bills while it plans countermoves. In fact, by spring, 1980, the Executive Committee felt the assets of the Association were solid enough to establish a $3,000 Federation Prize to be awarded annually to a member or group who propose a superior project.

*Our first journal had had to be abandoned after one issue. We tried again; the Journal, like the Association itself, was reborn. In its thirty-one years, it has undergone massive changes*

The many changes that have taken place in the Association's activities, but particularly in the discipline itself, are reflected in the thirty-one volumes of the *Central States Speech Journal.*

A typical early issue contained six to eight major articles; each, however, only four to eight pages long. The content was largely that of speech education: Speech Education for Adults, Organization of a High School Speech Course, A Cooperative Program of Speech Improvement for Elementary Children in Nebraska Rural Schools. Most articles were written out of the author's experience, or based on a simple survey.

A noteworthy feature, more valuable now than could have been suspected then, especially when viewing the Association historically, was a substantial section of news and notes about individuals and schools. Here were recorded the new speech buildings, the radio studios, the installation of recording equipment, the new departments—the big events of that era. The book review section was another useful aid to the classroom teacher. Then, as now, *Journal* articles echoed titles of convention programs. These statements are equally true of other regional journals.

Originally, the *Journal* was issued twice a year; in 1958 it went to three, and in 1961 to four, issues. Each editor left his own imprint on his volumes. Of many possible examples, I can mention only two.

Keith Brooks, The Ohio State University, editor 1958-61, initiated several features. One was an occasional guest editorial; that of N. Edd Miller, University of Michigan, president 1958-59, on "The Role of the Regional Speech Association," still makes good sense. The single-page feature by Franklin H. Knower, The Ohio State University, president 1938-39, "It's More Fun to Know," is fun to read. "Can a person communicate how he feels by the way he looks?" "YES!" came the answer, along with the source, "with a high degree of accuracy." "Is the strong, silent man the best administrator?" "NO! Good leader behavior and frequent communication are seen to be associated." (All this was twenty years ago.) A short series listed indispensable books for a teacher's library; along with Shakespeare, the Bible, and Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, were Wallace (ed.) *History of Speech Education in America* and Brigance (ed.) *History and Criticism of American Public Address.*

James W. Gibson, University of Missouri-Columbia, editor 1969-1975, improved *CSSJ's* appearance. He went to a slightly larger page size, achieved better balance of text and heading on inside pages,

ditched the CSSA bird that had appeared on covers so long that its edges were worn, and adopted a new cover typography. A "Special Reports" section accommodated short studies not appropriate for a major article.

Over the years, advertising pages declined from a peak of twelve to fifteen or twenty, to a mere one or two. Each 80-page issue contains about eight articles, all longer than formerly. News and book reviews have disappeared. Information about the Association itself, never extensive, has become minimal. A four-hour meeting of the Executive Council may be given half a page of *Journal* space, or none at all. Annual conventions are noted briefly.

A reason for the change in editorial content is that the rationale for CSSA itself has changed. Present worries about the certification of teachers, or of college acceptance of high school credits, are slight. In *Communication Education*, the profession has an outlet for articles on the improvement of instruction. Dennis Gouran, Indiana University, editor 1980-19--, writes that editorial policies are determined after consultation with previous editors and others.

Prospective contributors wonder about the odds of getting a manuscript accepted. Donovan Ochs, University of Iowa, reported in 1977 that 431 articles had been submitted in a three-year period and 115 published; slightly under one in four. Gibson put the figure at one out of every five or six; Gouran at one in five. In the last eight years they recall only one manuscript from a high school teacher.

It is fair even for a biased observer to say that *CSSJ* has, over the years, ranked as one of the two best regional publications. It reflects the interests of a mature profession. Its articles reflect careful research; they have been reviewed by the editor and his staff, plus an occasional outside referee, and are on specialized topics representing the current state of the art. *Journal* pages are fully open to younger scholars.

When, in 1933, the Association was considering publishing a journal, the prevailing argument against it was: Not enough manuscripts will be submitted. (The same argument was made in 1950, against the founding of *The Speech Teacher*). This argument has not been heard recently.



*Looking back over the First Fifty Years, attending a convention not with two dozen programs but seventy-five, and noting a registration of no mere 125 or even 300, we can view with pride what lies ahead*

After a Golden Anniversary convention should come a Golden Anniversary project to chart the next half century. To use the classic

symbols, what can we do between MCMLXXXI and the years ahead? How can meetings serve the needs of our clientele still better? What kind of materials do *Journal* readers find most stimulating? Could we produce an interesting, informative, personable, newsletter? Should we, with other regional groups, commission an *Index*? (An author likes his stuff to be readily locatable.) Were we right to abandon our *Directory*? An annual directory is an opportunity to present not only names of members, but also biographical information such as degrees, and both home and office addresses. Like the SCA *Directory*, it can contain lists of past officers and editors; and also outstanding young teachers of past years, convention cities, and other reference, historical, information.

How can we augment our resources still further? Can we hold our members longer? Can we devise new sources of income as fruitful as the four-way journal plan or the institutional membership? Can we better emphasize the inherent, built-in advantages of a regional convention meeting in the spring: less travel expense, greater intimacy, fewer concurrent sessions, special opportunities for job seekers and talent scouts?

In more ways than one, the thirteen states of the mid-American region are the heartland of the discipline. I would rather make this bold claim than to dig up all possible supporting facts, but I readily count that more than half of the Speech Communication Association's officers and editors of the last decade live in our area. A few years ago it was reported that Central States graduate departments had conferred nearly twice as many Ph.D.'s in speech communication as all other regions combined.

These observations, however, are surely too chauvinistic and provincial to dwell upon. Here and now we can note that our membership has quadrupled its best showing in our first decade. Nearly 500 of us subscribe to all four regional journals. Furthermore, 340 members of the Western association receive *CSSJ* through their journal exchange program, as do 350 from the Eastern and 312 from the Southern association. Four hundred and seventy-four libraries display our *Journal* on their sheves. Our programs, like those of the other regional groups, draw talent from all over the country.

Our founders would be astonished beyond words.

I have written about the Association, not about the discipline, except incidentally. Yet this anniversary is an occasion to remind ourselves of the immense value of what we do. We teach the art and science of communication, without which the human race would be a sorry sight. We communicate our own ideas and feelings in situations like conversation, discussion, and public speaking. We communicate the ideas and feelings of others in situations like acting and the reading of literature. Our discipline involves teaching people to do these things well. Our research takes place in the classroom, the library, the

laboratory, the studio, the clinic, the theatre, the highways and byways. Our professional associations help us to share our experiences, to learn from one another.

Somewhere, around a corner, is a vision of greatness. People will continue to come along to help us, as a discipline and as an association, share it.

The proper sentiment now is to look forward, not only to Halley's Comet in 1986, but to SCA's Diamond Jubilee in 1989. Then comes the second millenium—MM—followed by our own Diamond Jubilee in MMVI, and our Centennial in MMXXXI. Hundreds of teachers, directors, clinicians, administrators, and their spouses, here in Chicago in 1981, will be around to observe all of these illustrious happenings.

## Acknowledgments

I am particularly indebted to Patty Brown's University of Kansas master's thesis, *A History of the Central States Speech Association* (1974), written under the direction of David M. Berg. His study is based on news items in *Quarterly Journal of Speech* and *Central States Speech Journal*, the yearly minutes of the Executive Council, and letters to about twenty officers, former officers, and others.

An invaluable feature of the Brown thesis is the Appendix, listing (through 1974) officers, editors, Outstanding Young Teacher awardees, and dates and places of conventions. I can fully testify that these lists are not easy to compile and regret that the length prohibits their being reproduced in full at this time.

Wil A. Linkugel, University of Kansas, is archivist of the Association's records (though he disclaims the title as being too formal). I am grateful for his kindness in making these materials accessible.

Others have provided specific information, particularly Judith Trent, University of Dayton; Larry D. Clark, University of Missouri-Columbia; Keith Brooks, The Ohio State University; Dennis Gouran, Indiana University; Nancy Shapiro, Kent State University; James W. Gibson, University of Missouri-Columbia; Wilbur E. Gilman, Queens College; Donald Hill and Ruth Montgomery, Muskingum College.

Since this brief account is highly selective, I invite letters from those who can supply additional information, and will deposit their letters, along with those I now have, in the Archives, to go alongside of letters already there from Monroe, Thompson, Hitchcock, Harshbarger, Aly, Knower, McBurney, and others.